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The Popular Pursuit of DIY: Exploring the Role of Calculative Technologies in an Actor Network

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Abstract

This paper seeks to explain the popular growth in DIY activity through the theoretical lens of Callon's (1986) four moments of translation. This framing facilitates an understanding of the process by which DIY changed from an activity driven by economic necessity to a popular recreational pastime. The paper draws on empirical sources from the 1950s, a key moment in which DIY was embraced by the mass populace. A particular source of reference is the specialist DIY magazines which begin to appear during this decade. Through an ANT (actor network theory) lens, the empirical material illustrates how several diverse actors came together through a process of translation, mobilising a network of forces to promote DIY activity. Following Skærbæk and Melander (2004), the paper suggests the role of accounting, and calculative practices more generally, as interessement devices in this process. The labour cost saving associated with DIY acts as an important interface between actors in the network. Calculative technologies can therefore be seen as a central part of the process through which DIY becomes established as a popular pursuit.

Keywords: actor network theory, ANT, Callon, DIY, do it yourself, labour cost

1. Introduction

In British society at least, DIY (Do it Yourself) is a feature of popular culture. Television shows devoted to home renovations and reconstructions bombard the viewing public. A host of glossy magazines feature interior makeovers while advising readers on how to 'get the

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look'. Sprawling superstores, selling the requisite items needed for every aspect of home maintenance proliferate the landscape: B&Q, the UK's largest DIY chain, has 350 stores nationwide. This number rather pales into insignificance, however, when compared with the global giant of DIY: IKEA. With a presence in 27 countries, this Swedish icon has converted the masses into amateur DIY buffs. Hence it is not an overstatement to speak of the cultural significance of DIY in contemporary society.

Despite this commercial and cultural significance, to date, accounting research has not dallied with DIY. Although this is perhaps unsurprising; there has been a neglect of DIY in the academic literature more generally (Browne, 2000; Watson and Shove, 2008). As Jackson (2006, p.58) observes: "Academic investigations of do-it-yourself activity are notable by their scarcity." A number of reasons for such neglect have been posited. In the field of cultural theory for example, it is suggested that DIY is simply not a politically interesting activity (Melchionne, 1999), while in the domain of design, DIY has become lost in the blurred boundaries between design and arts and crafts (Atkinson, 2006).

This paper seeks to redress this neglect by exploring the role of calculative technologies in the growth of home repair and improvement activities. It proposes that such technologies are a significant actor in a network that has mobilised the phenomenon of DIY. The paper examines the cult of DIY by focusing primarily on the decade of the 1950s. This is a transformative period in the history of DIY as it represents that moment in which DIY shook off the shackles of an activity driven by necessity to one engaged in for pleasure. Effectively, this period witnessed the dawn of the contemporary DIY experience. A combination of new products, media attention, and shifting design imperatives reshaped home interiors and in so doing DIY became another expression of consumerism and lifestyle choice. The paper draws on a range of published literature devoted to DIY, especially the specialist DIY periodicals which start to emerge from the 1950s onwards.

The paper employs the theoretical lens of actor-network theory, in particular, Callon's (1986) four moments of translation. This framework is used to examine the manner in which calculative technologies, in particular the labour cost saving associated with DIY, became part of a network which was to ultimately mobilise the contemporary phenomenon of DIY. Following Skærbæk and Melander (2004), the paper suggests the role of accounting, and calculative practices more generally, as interessement devices. The paper argues that the

labour cost saving of DIY can be viewed as an important intersement device which encouraged the enrolment of a host of actors interested in advancing the DIY movement. Hence the paper suggests that accounting can be seen as a central part of the process through which DIY becomes established as a national pastime. This stance therefore, recognises the rich role of calculative technologies in shaping society. It moves the influence of accounting beyond the realm of such traditional boundaries as factory, audit firm or financial institution, to actively embrace the domain of popular culture.

After all, if accounting scholars are to fully embrace the social and organisational context of accounting (Hopwood, 1983), then this requires a movement beyond traditional fields of enquiry to embrace culturally significant phenomenon. Hopwood (1994) recognised the importance of examining alternate domains when he argued for attention to be paid to the role of accounting in everyday life. More recently, Jeacle (2012) has suggested the value of investigating the inter-relationship between accounting practice and popular culture. Indeed, a growing body of scholarly work has now begun to pay attention to everyday popular pursuits, the important contributions of Cooper and Johnston (2012) and Andon and Free (2012) in the fields of football and rugby respectively being prominent examples of such a widening research agenda. Consequently, the purpose of this paper is to contribute to this emergent field of research by examining the role of accounting in the popular pursuit of DIY, “an intrinsic part of the material culture of everyday life” (Atkinson, 2006, p.9).

The remainder of the paper is structured in a manner which recognises the richness of contextualisation. Hence, the next section offers an overview of the rationales for engaging in DIY. The cost saving aspect of DIY is a particular focus of attention here. The paper’s theoretical framework is presented in the following section. The paper’s methodology is outlined in section 4, followed by a theoretically informed discussion of the paper’s empirical data in section 5, which is structured around Callon’s (1986) four moments of translation. The final section contains some concluding comments.

2. Cost saving as a rationale for DIY

The academic literature on DIY, scant as it is, suggests a number of reasons as to why society would engage in this domestic activity. These rationales are, of course, historically situated. As Atkinson (2006) argues, while the citizen of wartime Britain may have had no choice other than to carry out their own home repairs, the contemporary consumer actively chooses

DIY as a leisure pursuit. Certainly, the contemporary DIY store is framed as an unthreatening space in which to browse during recreational hours (Mechionne, 1999). The proliferation of television shows devoted to home makeovers bears testament to the popularity of DIY as a leisure activity (Clarke, 2001). Indeed, the house and garden have become subject to the fickleness of fashion with each new trend requiring a further makeover (Bhatti and Church, 2000). The media in all its guises, from television to magazines to internet, feeds this frenzy of how the home should look and feel (Birdwell-Pheasant and Lawrence-Zúñiga, 1999). Consequently, the home has become a central site of commodification in contemporary society (Woodward, 2003).

Recent work within consumer theory has contributed to a further understanding of the growth in DIY pursuits. In particular, Campbell's (2005) work on the craft consumer is insightful. The craft consumer is an individual who brings skill and judgement to bear on their consumption experiences such that they create new products from existing products. In other words, through a creative and craft like process, these consumers construct "their own aesthetically significant end products" (Campbell, 2005, p.33). DIY, and the whole apparatus of home improvement, is identified by Campbell as an example of craft consumption. In terms of offering a rationale for this increasingly significant form of consumption practice, Campbell (2005, p.24) suggests that craft consumption, such as DIY, is driven by a "desire to engage in creative acts of self-expression". Other commentators have similarly recognised the role of DIY as a means of identity construction. The DIY process, argues Atkinson (2006), allows the individual to don the mantle of designer and in so doing express their unique taste. It enables the conversion of "alienated products into artefacts with personal associations" (Edwards, 2006, p.19). Hence DIY becomes an important means by which the individual creates their own cultural environment (Tomlinson, 1990). It is no coincidence that the creation of the customised environment is the predominant feature of the contemporary home makeover television show (Watson and Shove, 2008).

While explanations of DIY based around leisure, consumerism and identity are contemporary in nature, or at least more applicable from the 1950s onwards, cost saving as a driver of DIY activity appears to have been a constant presence. For example, Hackney's (2006, p.33) study of British women's magazines of the 1920s and 1930s reveals that the economies of DIY were well recognised – a 1935 feature in the magazine *Modern Woman* declares 'Be your own decorator and save money'. Browne's (2000) research into the DIY practices of households in Southampton during the 1950s found that own home maintenance was carried

out primarily due to economic need. The financial benefits of DIY were certainly a key message of the new DIY magazines launched during this decade (Jackson, 2006). Moving forward to the 1990s, and the issue of cost saving is still a crucial rationale behind DIY, at least in lower income areas according to Williams (2004). Such cost savings are important, not only for purely monetary reasons, but also for the financial independence they infer. In this regard, argues Atkinson (2006, p.6), DIY can be viewed as a democratising activity, freeing the homeowner from the perils of the professional tradesman. The cost saving of DIY after all, centres around the replacement of professional labour with one's own labour (Melchionne, 1999). Yet despite the fact that the actual job carried out is often identical in nature, the meaning of the labour undertaken in each case is significantly different. This is because industrialisation has separated the world of leisure from the world of work (Thompson, 1991, p.398). DIY is interesting in that it is a form of work which "contains all the qualities of a leisure activity" (Jackson, 2006, p.61).

This paper focuses on the labour cost saving attribute of DIY and views this saving as an illustrative example of a calculative technology. Insights from Miller and Napier (1993) are useful here. Their understanding of the broad shape and scope of accounting is such that they use the term calculation to capture the permeable territory of accounting: "The term calculation rather than accounting enables us to register more fully the diversity and multiplicity of such components" (Miller and Napier, 1993, p.632). Within this paper, the adoption of the term calculation allows us to explore the role and influence of the labour cost saving associated with DIY. It allows us to engage fully with the discursive nature of calculation, in particular, "the ways in which calculative practices are endowed with meaning" (Miller and Napier, 1993, p.645). It facilitates an appreciation of the transformative power of accounting and how "calculative practices alter the capacities of agents, organizations, and the connections among them" (Miller, 2001, p.379).

The empirical material which is presented in subsequent sections suggests the importance of cost saving as an actor within a network of forces, which when mobilised, ultimately created the contemporary phenomenon of DIY. In this manner, the paper seeks to push the boundaries of accounting's influence and further an appreciation of its broader social role. The accounting literature has already revealed the significance of accounting information within its social and organizational context. Hopwood's (1987, p.215) seminal study of Joshua Wedgewood's 18th century pottery famously highlighted the value of the "accounting

eye” that emerged with the implementation of new cost accounting practices. What this and other studies have evidenced is that accounting practices do not have to be complicated to be far reaching. Indeed, as Ahmed and Scapens (2000) have indicated in their history of cost allocation practices in Britain, the very simplicity of accounting procedures does not detract from their wider socio-economic significance.

3. Theoretical framework

The paper is theoretically informed by actor-network theory (ANT), a theory associated with the works of Bruno Latour, Michel Callon, and John Law (Callon, 1986; Latour, 1999; Law 1999; Law and Hassard, 1999). Since the 1980s, these sociology of science scholars have sought to investigate the processes by which scientific fact becomes fabricated. In other words, they have attempted to understand how facts get constructed and legitimated (Latour, 1987).

A core tenet of ANT is the concept of translation. Translation refers to the process by which actors interact, enrol allies, and mobilise resources in order to achieve some mutually desired outcome. As actors can be human or non-human in nature, the term actant has been usefully deployed within the ANT literature: “An actant can literally be anything provided it is granted to be the source of an action” (Latour, 1997, p.4). A particular feature of translation is that it is a method of association by which diverse actors come together and converge. Hence a machination of forces is assembled amongst heterogeneous parties; as Latour (1987, p.128) observes: “The simplest means of transforming the juxtaposed set of allies into a whole that acts as one is to tie the assembled forces *to one another*, that is, to build a machine.” The alliances so formed manifest in actor networks. This tethering together creates a powerful force: “Subtly woven and carefully thrown, this very fine net can be very useful at keeping groups in its meshes (Latour, 1987, p. 117).” When the network has achieved a certain level of strength, it becomes incontestable (Latour and Woolgar, 1979, pp. 241–243). In this manner, scientific pronouncements become invested with rigour and legitimacy.

ANT has proved a source of intellectual inspiration to accounting scholars since the 1990s (Justesen and Mouritsen, 2011) with Latour’s (1987) classic text *Science in Action* being the

dominant source of reference for ANT accounting studies. Indeed, such has been the significance of ANT that it has even affected the ‘language of accounting’ by introducing terms such as actants, inscription, and networks into the literature. As a theoretical lens, ANT has much to offer the accounting researcher. As Lowe (2001, p.347) observes, the significance of nonhuman actants within ANT particularly facilitates its deployment within accounting research. Accounting, in its many guises, is an illustrative example of a nonhuman actant. Moreover, the aims of ANT, to understand the connections between technology and society, chime with the objectives of the interdisciplinary accounting scholar in their quest to appreciate the linkages between micro accounting techniques and macro contexts. ANT provides the potential to reveal the wide scope of accounting’s power and influence. As Jeacle (2003, p.359) argues:

Adapting the translation model to the study of accounting innovation facilitates an understanding of the process by which new calculative technologies create linkages with broader social discourses.

Early uses of ANT in the accounting literature include the works of Miller (1990), Robson (1991; 1992), Preston et al. (1992) and Chua (1995). Miller’s (1990) contribution must be set within the broader context of his seminal work (together with Rose) on governmentality (Miller and Rose, 1990; Rose and Miller, 1992). These authors supplement aspects of Foucault’s (1991) thinking on governance with insights from Latour (1986, 1987) and Callon’s (1986) theory of translation. The central role of accounting, as a technology of government in this process, is highlighted by Miller (1990). Drawing on ANT, Miller (1990) outlines the possibilities of accounting to create centres of calculation which in turn render distant domains governable. Robson’s (1991) contribution is particularly important as it laid out a conceptual agenda for how ANT could provide a theoretical toolbox for the accounting scholar. Accounting, like science, he observes, is often viewed as a neutral and technical practice. Just as the sociology of science scholars attempt to understand the social context of scientific endeavour, the accounting researcher has increasingly sought to understand the wider arena in which accounting operates. Framing the relationship between accounting and its social context as a process of translation, argues Robson (1991), facilitates this broader research agenda. Robson’s (1992) subsequent paper draws on ANT to conceptualise accounting as a form of inscription. The argument here is that accounting information contains the ability to represent aspects of the organisation; it can inscribe information into

financial numbers. Hence inscription enables knowledge to be accumulated at a central point within the organisation, facilitating control in the form of ‘action at a distance’.

ANT has been quite extensively deployed within management accounting research as a means of understanding the implementation of accounting controls and practices within the organizational context. Preston et al. (1992) famously drew on ANT to examine the fabrication of the black box which the managerial accounting system ultimately becomes. Their study of a budgeting initiative within the UK National Health Service highlights the fluid and changing nature of an accounting system as it is implemented. Subsequently, in the context of the Australian hospital system, Chua (1995) found ANT a useful means of illustrating the importance of a network of interests, rather than economic rationality, in understanding the process of accounting change. The sociology of translation was also used by Lowe (2000) to examine changes to the accounting information systems within a New Zealand hospital. The paper reveals how accounting inscriptions enrolled actors into the change process, and hence, how accounting can play a central role in creating the conditions by which change becomes accepted within an organisation.

In this manner, ANT facilitates a rich understanding of accounting change which, as Justesen and Mouritsen (2011, p.171) argue “challenges the ‘diffusion model’ of change”, and by contrast offers an insight into the often unexpected way in which accounting systems become translated, enrolled and mobilised within actor networks. For example, Alcouffe et al. (2008) draw on the sociology of translation to explain the spread of management accounting innovations, in particular, the Georges Perrin and ABC methods in France, while Quattrone and Hopper (2005) use an ANT perspective to examine SAP implementation. The use of ANT leads the latter authors to observe that action at a distance should not be regarded as a linear function across time and space, and hence local sites of control require attention. Pipan and Czarniawska (2010) frame the introduction of management accounting practices in the Italian public administration as the construction of an actor-network, which they argue, provides a more complex and nuanced view of the process of implementation. Indeed, ANT offers not only a means of understanding accounting change, but also changes to the nature and role of the accountant, as Becker et al. (2014) have recently illustrated in their study of the transformation of the identities of public sector accountants in Germany following the introduction of accruals output-based budgeting.

The field of business reporting provides the context for Guilloux et al's (2013) ANT study. The authors draw on Latour's (1992) translation map to study the battle between two business reporting standards for the digital exchange of data. ANT facilitates an understanding of the tensions surrounding a program of action and its associated anti-program; specifically, the translation map provided a means of visually representing the standards battle. A particularly novel feature of Guilloux et al's (2013) study was that the authors were dealing with a live situation, they were therefore in a prime position to observe the fabrication of the networks of interest as they evolved; they could witness how the enrolments and detours in the battles unfolded. Other arenas in which ANT has been applied include Jeacle's (2003) study of accounting practices within the 1920s US department store. ANT is the chosen theoretical lens through which to explore how a simple accounting technique of overhead allocation became part of a powerful actor network which ultimately mobilized a national system of standardised clothes sizing. Similarly, translation theory allows Skærbæk and Melander (2004) to recount the manner in which accounting became implicated within the translation of strategy in a Danish ferry company. Drawing specifically on Callon's (1986) work, the authors suggest that in addition to considering accounting as an inscription device, translation theory also allows us to view accounting as an interessement device. A subsequent paper by Skærbæk and Thorbjørnsen (2007) illustrates how such accounting based interessement devices can play a role in shaping and fixing actors' identities during the translation process.

In summary ANT has provided a rich lens for accounting scholars. It has helped bestow a starring role on accounting – accounting becomes an important 'actor' in a continual web of social, organizational and political manoeuvres. As Skærbæk and Melander (2004, p.19) aptly observe:

According to the view of the sociology of translation, accounting can be defined as a set of resources that may be used in differing ways as components of political strategies to build episodic networks of power relations in order to change the world.

This paper seeks to contribute to this stream of ANT inspired work by drawing on Callon's (1986) four moments of translation. In this article Callon examines the controversy caused when the stock of scallops in St. Brieuc Bay (France) declines and three marine scientists propose a future cultivating strategy. Within a few years of the crisis, a scientific knowledge of scallop production had emerged, alongside a powerful network of local fishermen. Callon traces this transformation using a sociology of translation. The process of translation involves

four stages: problematization, interessement, enrolment, and mobilization. While each will be outlined below, in practice, the four moments of translation may not be so clearly defined, but rather, as Callon argues, merge and overlap with each other.

Problematization encompasses the efforts taken to demonstrate that a particular path is the answer to a defined difficulty. It is the process, Callon argues, of making oneself indispensable to proceedings. It involves two steps: determining the identity of the actors concerned, and establishing “an obligatory passage point” (Callon, 1986, pp.204-6). In the St. Brieuc Bay story, the marine scientists identified the other actors (the fishermen, other scientific colleagues, and the scallops) and established themselves as the obligatory passage point in the new network. Hence increased scallop production is presented as in the interests of all the actors concerned and this is seen to be achieved through the scientists’ proposals.

Interessement comprises of the actions taken to link together relevant actors, or as Callon puts it, to lock into place all the allies. It involves the establishment of an interface or interest between actors with a common goal.

Interessement is the group of actions by which an entity ... attempts to impose and stabilize the identity of the other actors it defines through its problematization. Different devices are used to implement these actions ... The interessement, if successful, confirms (more or less completely) the validity of the problematization and the alliance it implies. (Callon, 1986, pp. 207-210).

As noted in the above quote, interessement devices are an important means of enrolling the various stakeholders. For example, in the scallop story, a range of debates, meetings and scientific literature combine to convince actors of the validity of the proposals of the marine scientists.

Enrolment, the third moment of translation, represents the successful outcome of interessement. As Callon (1986, p.211) argues:

To describe enrolment is thus to describe the group of multilateral negotiations, trials of strength and tricks that accompany the interessements and enable them to succeed.

In the scallop story, the fishermen are easily enrolled with the hope of a better harvest, and the scientific colleagues are prepared to accept the principles of the experiment. But the scallops themselves need some convincing before they anchor and reproduce. Successful anchorage is threatened by issues such as tidal currents and parasites. Hence the three marine scientists must negotiate hard to enrol the actual fish into the network.

The final stage of the translation process is mobilization. It results in the designation of a spokesperson who legitimately speaks for all actors. In Callon's story, the three marine researchers come to speak for the fishermen, the scallops and the scientific community. In other words, these previously diverse actors are displaced, rendered mobile, and reassembled in a manner in which three researchers emerge to represent them all.

These chains of intermediaries which result in a sole and ultimate spokesman can be described as the progressive mobilization of actors who render the following propositions credible and indisputable by forming alliances and acting as a unit of force. (Callon, 1986, p.216).

Therefore mobilization is characterised by the creation of a coherent identity in which there is collective agreement and acceptance by actors within the network, and more importantly, acceptance of the process by which this unity is maintained. Successful mobilization is a consensus which confines and constrains the actors within the network.

The irony of the scallops story is that the scientific experiment subsequently fails. The scallops engage in dissident behaviour in that their larvae do not successfully anchor (at least not in sufficient numbers). Then the fishermen break rank and fish the protected area, and finally even the marine researchers' scientific colleagues begin to doubt the experiment. The alliance becomes unstable. But as Callon warns, an actor-network can be contested at any future time. Regardless of perceptions of success or failure however, Callon's four moments of translation provide a means of understanding not only the actions of French fishermen or marine scientists, but also the relationship between science and a much wider set of social and political agendas. Hence Callon's work, and ANT more generally, recognises that science and technology are social and cultural phenomena. It is this recognition that makes

the theory's application within accounting so apt - as accounting, like technology, is socially and culturally embedded.

4. Sources and method

The 1950s represents an important moment in the shifting attitudes towards DIY. It encompasses that time period in which DIY transforms from mere necessity to a recognised leisure experience. Consequently, it is this decade that forms the focus of consideration. The paper draws on a range of secondary material sources from the era. For instance, the decade witnessed the publication of an array of DIY manuals. These handbooks for the handyman effectively instructed the amateur in all aspects of home repair and improvement. Examples of titles include: Hayward (1953) *The Handyman's Pocket Book*, Jasper (1957) *The Handyman Painter and Decorator*, and Judge (1952) *The Handyman in the Home*. Publications associated with home exhibitions also proved a useful source of material. For instance, the Daily Mail Ideal Home Exhibition had, since the early 20th century, been an important forum for hosting the latest innovations in home design and living. Hence, the annual publication associated with the show, the *Daily Mail Ideal Home Book*, was a valuable reference point for capturing significant trends during the 1950s.

Although DIY tasks were traditionally carried out by men, women were seen as influential in initiating home improvements and providing the overall design direction. Therefore, women's magazines throughout the 1950s were perused for their DIY content. The following publications, in particular, were examined: *Woman* (weekly magazine), *Woman's Weekly* (weekly magazine) and *Woman's Journal* (monthly magazine). In addition, to provide a more general frame of reference, the Times newspaper's Digital Archive was searched between 1950 to 1965 for all mention of the terms Do it Yourself or DIY in the article title.

The paper's main source of empirical data, however, comes from the specialist DIY magazines that were launched in the 1950s. These monthly periodicals provided the handyman with formalised DIY information not previously available. Consequently, they constitute a crucial element in the promotion of DIY during this decade. The two main magazines in this genre were *Practical Householder* (first published in 1955) and *Do it Yourself* (first published in 1957). The contents of both journals were reviewed for the 10 year period commencing from the date of first publication. In addition to the monthly magazine, both publications subsequently launched a yearly Annual. The contents of these

annuals were also examined up until the mid 1960s. With the exception of the data gathered from the Times Digital Archive, all material was sourced from the collections of the British Library or the National Library of Scotland.

In analyzing the empirical material, the work of Prior (2008) was influential. Prior (2008) provides some innovative ideas with regards to the use of documents in social research. He argues that social scientists have predominantly focused on the content of documents which leads to a limited perspective in which documents are viewed as passive containers of evidence. Rather Prior (2008, p.833) argues that documents are “vital objects” which have the potential to actively shape social interactions through their membership of networks. In adopting this stance he is heavily influenced by actor network theory, which views documents as actors or actants with a dynamic character: “documents function as props, allies, rule-makers, calculators, decision-makers, experts, and illustrators” (Prior, 2008, p.828). Further, as part of an actor-network, documents can influence social and economic configurations. Such a conception of the role of documents is important from a methodological perspective as it suggests, Prior (2008) argues, that research questions should be directed at the manner in which documents are deployed and exchanged within networks. Consequently, in conducting an analysis of the documents used within this paper, the role of DIY manuals, women’s magazines, and home exhibition publications was considered, not only in terms of their content, but also how such texts may have shaped the broader DIY movement of the 1950s. As Prior (2008, p.824) aptly observes: “once a text or document is sent out into the world there is simply no predicting how it is going to circulate and how it is going to be activated in specific social and cultural contexts.”

5. ANT, labour cost, and the rise of DIY

5.1 Historical context

While determining the exact origins of movements and phenomena can often be a futile process, there is evidence to suggest that many of the characteristics of contemporary DIY were formed in the craft pursuits of the 18th century British housewife (Edwards, 2006). Certainly, by the late 19th century, craft activities in the home were flourishing as a result of the Arts and Crafts Movement (Naylor, 1971). Its manifestation in the middle class home was in the form of a range of craft practices, from embroidery and lace making to bookbinding

and jewellery making (Callen, 1995). The products of such craft endeavours often provided the Victorian housewife with opportunities to earn income in a respectable manner (Walker, 1995).

An interest in home crafts continued into the 20th century with the interwar period in particular witnessing a wonderful flourishing of what is commonly referred to as handicrafts. It was at this juncture, argues Kirkham (1995) that home crafts made the transition from a form of work to a form of leisure; it became a popular pastime of masses of British women. An important medium in the dissemination of handicraft skills throughout the 1920s and 1930s was the women's magazine. Women's magazines also started to encourage their readers to engage with more physically demanding home care activities such as wall papering, floor staining, and even furniture construction (Hackney, 2006). The cost savings of these ventures were advertised through feature headlines, such as the one in a 1935 edition of *Modern Woman* which declared 'Be your own decorator and save money' (Hackney, 2006, p.33). The boundaries between home crafts and DIY were beginning to blur.

The advent of the Second World War thrust DIY into the public limelight and made it not only a necessity but a patriotic duty. Government programmes urged citizens to 'Make Do and Mend', an all encompassing ideal which involved recycling and repair as part of the war effort to minimize material wastage (Browne, 2000). In practical terms, this initiative ranged from DIY activities around the home to care of one's own personal attire through the reworking of old into new clothes (Atkinson, 2006). Posters produced by the Ministry of Information were a particularly popular means of communicating this message of self sufficiency (Geffrye Museum, 1974; Yass, 1983). The campaign itself was seen to be considerably valuable in booting morale on the home front (Marwick, 1976). In terms of the history of DIY, the significance of the war is that a mentality of 'Make Do and Mend' entered and subsequently remained in the public conscious (Browne, 2000).

Post war, Britain faced a challenging process of reconstruction. Thousands of houses across the country had been either destroyed or severely bomb damaged which led to a national housing crisis (MacDonald and Porter, 1990). A New Towns Act was passed in 1946 to create new residential spaces for housing development (May, 1995, p.424). Within the confines of the home, the post war reconstruction was to leave its mark in the shape of the utility furniture scheme. The rationale for this scheme was to deal with the shortages in

timber as a result of the war and to ensure that such limited supplies were fairly distributed (Dover, 1991). What is significant about the utility furniture scheme is that during the period of its operation, from 1942 to the early 1950s, it provided the state with considerable control over the look of the interior of the British home. In particular, the scheme allowed the state to impose its opinion on what constituted ‘good design’ (MacDonald and Porter, 1990). The essence of the newly promoted style was simplicity, and one which was infused with Modernist principles regarding design efficiency and ‘fitness for purpose’ (Dover, 1991).

More generally, the post war era witnessed the promotion of good design ideals in the home. Bodies such as the Design and Industries Association attempted to educate the taste of the consumer in the modernist way of interior decoration through the use of public displays (Clarke, 2001). It is also during this period that the British Council of Industrial Design was established by the Board of Trade (Dover, 1991). This influential body was to provide modernism with a “hegemonic hold” over British design (Browne, 2000, p.133). It deployed a significant propaganda campaign, comprising publications, conferences and exhibitions, to push forward its design agenda (MacDonald and Porter, 1990). Women’s magazines were a particularly useful medium for launching the new styles into the British home (Partington, 1995). Of course, the reality of actual living conditions was often a more confused affair with homes reflecting a mix of old and new furniture resulting in a design look far removed from the ideals of the modernists (Attfield, 1995). Yet this national movement in design taste, promoted initially through the utility furniture scheme and subsequently the British Council of Industrial Design, is an important backdrop to understanding the phenomenon of DIY. The modernist taste cultivated during this immediate post war period was to influence the scope and direction of DIY, with householders wishing to replicate the new contemporary style within their own domestic domain (Browne, 2000). Together with advances in tools and materials, the scene was now set for a transformative era of DIY.

The 1950s is recognised as a pivotal period in the history of DIY. As Browne (2000, p.131) observes: “Do-it-yourself can be seen as part of the culture of post-war reconstruction, domesticity and then late 1950s consumerism; of people building a better world in the aftermath of World War II.” The unprecedented boom in DIY activity during this decade will be presented below using the theoretical lens of Callon’s (1986) four moments of translation.

5.2 Problematization: DIY as solution

As noted earlier, post war Britain faced a number of challenges which had an immediate impact on the domestic conditions of the populace. These included a housing crisis and a shortage of timber and other supplies which led to a system of furniture rationing. In addition, Britain was also experiencing a period of buoyant employment post war (Stevenson, 1984), which resulted in chronic labour shortages prompting the prudent homeowner to become more reliant on their own skills rather than that of the professional tradesman (Johnson, 1977). Alongside these difficulties, home ownership had surged since the beginning of the century encouraging an interest in home maintenance (Jackson, 2006).¹ From an ANT perspective, this is the context from which to understand the ‘problems’ for which DIY came to represent the ‘solution’. The canvassing for DIY emerges from a number of sources and in the interests of several actors.

The published literature of the 1950s provides a rich seam from which to observe the promotion of DIY. A host of DIY advice manuals begin to appear with titles such as *The Handyman’s Pocket Book* (Hayward, 1953) and *The Handyman Painter and Decorator* (Jasper, 1957). Home improvement becomes a constant feature in women’s magazines of the era, encouraging women to engage in their own version of DIY (MacDonald and Porter, 1990). For example, a 1959 April issue of the popular *Woman’s Weekly* contained a four page spread on how to make a kitchen cupboard (11th April issue, pp.29-32). Another popular publication, *Woman*, introduced a regular feature in the 1950s entitled New Homemakers which outlined the DIY activities of new home dwellers.² Magazines devoted entirely to the topic of DIY also emerged during this period. Two of the key publications in this genre were *Practical Householder* and *Do It Yourself* which were launched in 1955 and 1957 respectively (Browne, 2000, p.131). These monthly magazines contained a wealth of practical guidance on all aspects of interior and exterior house care. They were also actively vocal in their advocacy of DIY. The Editorial of the first issue of each magazine clearly sets out the rationale for DIY and hence the demand for the journal: DIY offers homeowners the perfect solution to the current problem of high labour costs by providing them with the knowledge to do it themselves and hence save money:

¹ In 1918 only 23% of households were owner occupied, this rose to 42% by 1961. Office for National Statistics. <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/census/2011-census-analysis/a-century-of-home-ownership-and-renting-in-england-and-wales/short-story-on-housing.html>. Accessed December 2014.

² See for example, *Woman*, 4th May 1957.

The ‘Do-It- Yourself’ movement has reached such proportions today that it can only be dealt with satisfactorily by a journal entirely devoted to it. Apart from the thousands of people who enjoy making and repairing things and doing jobs around the home, rising labour costs have compelled many more to undertake work themselves. There is now a nation-wide demand for specialist information on every practical household subject. This journal will, therefore, co-ordinate this great national interest in home craftsmanship. This public has found its own answer to the problem of rising prices. (*The Practical Householder*, Vol. 1, No.1, October, 1955, Editorial, p.15)

Our team of special investigators reported that there was a tremendous demand for really expert instruction on every aspect of the 101 things to do in the home, instruction so simply explained that the many hundreds of thousands of complete beginners could understand and profit by it. There was only one way to satisfy this demand – to produce a bright new monthly journal compiled by experts for the amateur ... Our policy and programme is simplicity itself. In brief: everything about everything in home, garden and workshop. We shall tell you how to make and mend. In the home we shall show you, in the cheapest possible way, how to decorate, repair, re-build. How to adopt, adapt and improve in the cheapest possible manner. (*DIY*, Vol.1, No.1, March 1957, Editorial, p.19).

Other advantages of DIY were also advocated by these specialist magazines. For example, DIY was seen to provide a solution to the shortage of accommodation by providing the know-how to build one’s own house or to convert larger houses into flats (*The Practical Householder* – Vol. 5, No.55, August, 1960, p.777). The DIY magazines also provide a voice for another important actor: the DIY enthusiasts themselves. The readers of these specialist publications, who were usually homeowners, were attracted to both the cost savings of DIY in addition to its attributes as a hobby. Legislative changes to working hours and holiday leave meant that homeowners now had increased leisure time in which to conduct home maintenance (Bray and Raitz, 2001). Consequently, DIY was not only promoted as a money saving initiative, it was equally encouraged as an enjoyable leisure pursuit:

Do-it-yourself is now a major industry in Britain and it has come to stay. What was in the beginning an economic necessity has now become a pleasurable pastime which

brings profit to the pocket and self-satisfaction to many thousands of folk in every strata of society. (*DIY*, Vol.1, No.1, March 1957, Editorial p.19).

Another set of actors interested in the promotion of DIY were the manufacturers of a host of new products which flooded the market from the 1950s and which made home improvements more achievable for the amateur. For example, the advent of water based emulsion paint, the paint roller, and vinyl floor tiles made interior decoration an easy task for the handyman (Goldstein, 1998). Equally, the launch of the hand held power drill suddenly enabled the novice to embark on a range of carpentry tasks (Gelber, 1997). Importantly, where previously building products were seen to be the sole preserve of tradesmen, these new offerings were now available to purchase by the domestic handyman. Although the contemporary style DIY superstore was still some years away and the traditional hardware store or builders yard dominated (MadDonald and Porter, 1990), manufactures, recognising a commercial opportunity, had started marketing their products direct to the consumer (Jackson, 2006). For example, Wall Paper Manufacturers Ltd, Britain's largest supplier of wallpaper, began selling their wares through retail outlets; in the decade between 1948 and 1958, the volume of wallpaper sales almost trebled (Johnson, 1977, p.69). Hence, the advent of DIY heralded a business boom for the manufacturer which did not go unnoticed by the press at the time:

The growth in owner occupation of houses, combined with the high cost of work done by builders and decorators, has led to a much greater expenditure on materials by householders doing the work themselves than would have normally been the case if they had been obliged to make use of the services of professional contractors. The companies to reap the benefit of this development have been manufactures of paint, wallpapers, floor-coverings and hand tools, many of whom have gone to considerable lengths to cater specially for the supply of materials to amateur users, providing materials that could be used with the minimum of expertise. (*The Times*, 5 February, 1962, p.16.

Also notable during this period is the role of the media. Since the 1930s, the radio had been a medium to communicate the advantages of DIY; with presenter W.P. Matthew becoming the first 'handyman' of BBC broadcasts (Atkinson, 2006). The advent of television in the 1950s provided a particularly powerful platform from which to launch DIY to a mass audience. The DIY enthusiast, Barry Bucknell, emerged during this decade, first providing expert DIY

advice on the women's show *About the House*, before becoming a popular household name with his own television series *Barry Bucknell's Do It Yourself* (Jackson, 2006, p.59). In terms of the print media, the Daily Mail newspaper, the popular paper of the working and lower middle classes, had launched its first Ideal Home Exhibition in October 1908, attracting 160,000 visitors to the London venue (Ryan, 1997, p.21). The elaborate annual exhibits soon came to represent a modernity to which visitors aspired (Clarke, 2001). Women in particular, were enthralled by the displays and consumption possibilities that the amazing new products offered for their domestic lifestyles (Ryan, 2000). In the 1950s, the 'American style' fitted kitchen quickly became the coveted home accessory (Browne, 2000). From 1946 onwards, the Daily Mail published an annual to accompany its home exhibition. A review of this annual throughout the 1950s reveals numerous references to DIY and its advantages. For example, the annual featured articles on how to mend chairs (1951-52 annual), deal with damp (1952-53 annual), dry rot (1953-54 annual), and lay floor tiles (1956 annual).

A final actor interested in the issue of DIY was the state or government of the day. DIY presented as a possible solution to Britain's housing crisis. For instance, government grants were available to tenants of older Council accommodation who were willing to redecorate their homes for themselves (*Do it Yourself Magazine*, June 1958, p.555). Government grants were also made available to owner occupiers seeking to improve the sanitation and hot water systems of older houses (*Do it Yourself Magazine*, February 1959, p.111).

As noted in the earlier theoretical section, problematization involves two steps, or as Callon (1986) would say, a double movement: determining the identity and interests of the actors concerned and establishing an obligatory passage point. Applying Callon's lens to the phenomenon of DIY, it can be argued that during the 1950s, DIY emerged as an activity in which several actors had a vested interest. For example, the following actors can be identified and the following statement of interests can be made. The specialist DIY magazines sought to promote DIY and hence the success of their periodicals. Women's magazines sought to feature articles which appealed to their female readership, a readership who was increasingly interested in DIY features. Manufacturers of new DIY products wanted to earn profits from an expanding customer base. Home exhibition organisers wished to attract more visitors by exhibiting DIY themed displays. The government wanted to address the housing shortage through DIY sponsored activity. The radio and television media sought to entertain listeners/viewers with popular shows on the theme of DIY. And last, but not least, the home

owner wanted to have an attractive and fully working home without the expense of engaging a professional.

In ANT terms, we witness how each of these actors seeks to identify themselves as possessing the solution to the housing and labour shortage problem. As Callon (1986, 206) observes, “*problematization* describes a system of alliances, or associations, between entities, thereby defining the identity and what they ‘want’”. In this manner, DIY becomes established as the obligatory passage point. Similar to the way in which the marine scientists in the St. Brieuc Bay case present their research program as a solution to the scallop crisis (Callon, 1986), each of the actors involved in this case view DIY as the answer. As Lowe (2000, p.86) observes: “Problematization refers to agents' efforts to make other agents subscribe to their own conceptions by demonstrating that they have the right solutions to, or definitions of, the others' problems.” Hence problematization provides a useful means of explaining the emergence of the various actors and the rhetoric deployed by each in making the case for DIY. The construct of problematization facilitates an understanding of how the problematic is shaped and how DIY emerges as a solution.

In the following section, we witness how a calculative technology in the form of a labour cost saving, becomes an important interessement device between these various actors.

5.3 Interessement: DIY and labour cost saving

As discussed earlier, interessement involves creating an interface between actors. Interessement devices are deployed in this process. As Callon (1986, p.208) observes: “To interest other actors is to build devices which can be placed between them and all other entities who want to define their identities otherwise.” Following Skærbæk and Melander (2004), this paper argues that accounting, in the form of the calculative technology of labour cost saving, can be viewed as an important interessement device which encourages the enrolment of a host of actors interested in advancing the DIY movement. This argument can be illustrated by drawing on the following empirical sources of the era.

Cost saving is a constant feature of DIY discourse throughout the 1950s and early 1960s. DIY advice manuals such as Judge's (1952) *The Handyman in the Home* proudly proclaim that a knowledge of DIY allows the handyman to “avoid a good deal of expense” (preface). The Daily Mail Ideal Home Book, the accompaniment to the annual exhibition, warns readers

that the convenience of employing a professional decorator must be paid for through an increase in “your overdraft and your bank manager’s blood pressure” (Daily Mail Ideal Home Book, 1950-51, p.163). The DIY features appearing in women’s magazines regularly refer to the money saved from doing it for oneself and provide supporting evidence of the cost of both options³. Every issue of the specialist DIY magazines, *Practical Householder* and *Do It Yourself*, carries some reference to the monies to be saved from embarking on DIY, not surprising perhaps when the slogan of the latter publication is *Do it Better, Do it Cheaper*. These sentiments are backed up with numerous working illustrations of the cost savings to be made by the home handyman. For example, electrical rewiring can be done for at least half the cost (*Do it Yourself* Magazine, February, 1963, p.111), a brick fireplace can be built for “between one-third and a half of the ready-made article” (*Do it Yourself* Annual, 1960, p.78), and a DIY garage can result in a savings of “about £100” (*Do it Yourself* Annual, 1961, p.63). One article even outlines the steps involved in self building an entire bungalow, a process which would save the handyman about one third of the cost of buying it ready-made (*Do it Yourself* Annual, 1963, p.50).

The empirical sources indicate that the economies of DIY were inherently tied to the savings arising from substituting professional labour with one’s own exertions. In other words, there is a clear understanding that DIY removes the significant labour element of the cost of a job. For example, an article in *The Times* remarks:

Undoubtedly the most potent factor in do-it-yourself is its economic appeal ... The secret lies not in the use of inferior materials but in the cutting out of labour costs. For the man who is prepared to help himself the saving may amount to between 8s. and 10s. in the pound for furniture making and up to 14s. for house decorating. (*The Times*, 9 April, 1960, p.7).

A central message of the specialist DIY magazines is that they offered the expert knowledge to allow the handyman to avoid the services of the professional tradesman and hence save on the labour cost of the job. As the Editor of *Do it Yourself* Magazine announces:

As the largest part of the cost of having anything done by the professional is for his labour it is very obvious that once the ‘mystique’ of any trade has been revealed there

³ See for example, the article on making a window blind in *Woman*, 15th June 1957, p.16.

will be thousands of amateurs ready and capable to carry out the work. (DIY, October, 1963, p.1119).

In addition to such technical knowledge, the handyman also needed to have the available time to engage in DIY activities. Hence cost saving also becomes bound up in the replacement of professional labour time with the leisure time of the home owner. The DIY magazines were quick to promote the value of the handyman's time in this regard:

..the leisure time you spend on DIY is in fact a highly profitable pastime when you remember that almost 70 per cent – sometimes more! – of the cost of 'having the decorators in' is for work done which may, or may not, be as good as you could do yourself" (*Do it Yourself*, June 1958, p.555).

Consequently, the monetary cost of a DIY job is clearly seen to be limited to the raw material cost: "The great merit of do-it-yourself is that experiments cost nothing more than the cost of the materials plus your own time and that is something most folk can spare" (DIY, March, 1958, p.215). This understanding of cost is evident in DIY initiatives even beyond the confines of the private home. For example, it was suggested that local councils could reduce costs by enabling tenants to do up their homes themselves, tenants to be reimbursed for the cost of materials (*The Times*, 18 February 1957, p.5). Similarly, one Oxford College promoted the idea of their undergraduates redecorating old student accommodation by offering to cover the materials cost of such endeavours (*The Times*, 21 November, 1962, p.14).

In this manner, the calculative technology of labour cost saving gave credence to the problem for which DIY was the solution. Following Skærbæk and Melander (2004), this paper suggests that the saving in labour cost associated with DIY came to act as an interessement device which began to successfully enrol a range of actors from divergent domains. An assemblage of actors converged, comprising homeowners, tenants, the government, the press, women's magazines, DIY magazines, and home exhibitors. The identity of each of these actors becomes defined and stabilised in the process. The work of Skærbæk and Thorbjørnsen (2007) is insightful here. As these authors observe, the shaping of identities is central to the process of translation. Specifically, Skærbæk and Thorbjørnsen (2007) suggest how accounting technologies can act as interessement devices by defining and fixing the interests

of actors. In the case of DIY, the calculative technology of labour cost saving both stabilized the role of each actor and created an interface between them all. For example, cost saving becomes a key priority for the homeowner, an opportunity offered by the DIY magazines, and an attractive feature of the new manufacturing products featured in the press. Following Miller (2001, p.392), the case is therefore a useful illustration of “the roles particular calculative practices play in making operable the assemblage of ideas, practices, and people that forms from time to time.” As an interestment device, the calculative technology of cost saving captured the interest of the diverse parties and secured the next stage of the process of translation, the enrolment into the DIY network.

5.4 Enrolment: the DIY network

According to Goldstein (1998), DIY as a cultural phenomenon has been formed by a combination of the interactions between homeowners, manufacturers, retailers and the media. In ANT terms, we witness the formation of an assemblage, a coming together of these diverse actors to create a powerful actor network. This section provides examples of the strands and linkages formed between the members of this network from the 1950s onwards.

The specialist DIY magazines played a central role in the enrolment process. With one hand they reached out to readers of the magazine, those actually engaged in DIY activity, and with the other hand they connected with the manufactures of a growing number of new DIY products. The engagement with readers occurred in several ways. Both *Practical Householder* and *Do it Yourself* magazine launched free advice services which provided answers to readers’ technical queries. By 1963, *Do it Yourself* was reporting that it had dealt with more than 75,000 of such queries in the previous five years (*Do it Yourself* Annual, 1963, p.19). Readers, of which there were an estimated 2.3 million of *The Practical Householder*, (*The Practical Householder*, March, 1957, p.281) and 3.5 million of *Do it Yourself* magazine (*Do it Yourself* Annual 1965, p.17), were also encouraged to submit articles and DIY tips to the journals. For instance, the Editor of the very first issue of *The Practical Householder* declares:

We shall encourage readers to write articles on their methods of doing particular jobs or on the construction of some piece of apparatus which they have made. Month by

month, we shall publish valuable hints contributed by readers (*The Practical Householder*, October, 1955, p.15).

Certainly a stream of correspondence between reader and Editor appears to have been common. The Editor of *Do it Yourself* magazine refers to the “many many hundreds of encouraging and enthusiastic letters received from readers” following its launch (*Do it Yourself Magazine*, May, 1957, p.205), while the Editor of *The Practical Householder* thanked his readers for the “many complimentary and appreciative letters received” arising from providing a free gift to readers in a previous issue of the magazine (*The Practical Householder*, November, 1962, p.1097).

It appears that readers also wrote into the Editors regarding products advertised in the magazines. For example, the Editor of *Practical Householder* reports: “Many of our readers in their letters to us express appreciation of our advertisement pages and of their interesting qualities” (*The Practical Householder*, April, 1958, p.443). This provides an example of another important link in the network: that between readers and manufacturers. Manufacturers communicated with the home handyman through a wide range of product advertisements in the new DIY magazines. These 1950s adverts provide a fascinating glimpse into the clear gender divisions of labour in home DIY. Although the adverts presented a united front of couples working on DIY projects together, they were generally framed around the wife assisting the husband in his labours (Browne, 2000). Indeed, DIY was seen as playing an important role in maintaining masculine identity in 1950s Britain (Jackson, 2006). Nonetheless, women were acknowledged as the main decision makers in both the design of home improvements and in the choice of consumer products used in that reconstruction (Browne, 2000).

In addition to making a connection with the reader through advertising, manufacturers were also enrolled into the network through the Editorial features in the DIY magazines. Review of these periodicals reveals frequent reference by the Editors to the range of new products on offer and their role in promoting the DIY movement. For example, the Editor of *Do it Yourself* magazine states that “much credit is due to the inventive genius of manufacturers of equipment and materials” (*Do it Yourself Magazine*, March 1957, p.19). The paint-roller and electric drill received particular plaudits (*Do it Yourself Magazine*, July, 1959, p.675). Other new products such as washable wallpapers, one coat paint, plastics and resin based adhesives

were seen as an example of how manufacturers were “mainly responsible for the extension of the scope of d-i-y” (*Do it Yourself* Annual, 1960, p.17).

In addition to their monthly publications, the specialist DIY magazines held annual exhibitions (Jackson, 2006). Providing technical DIY advice and displaying the latest products for the handyman, these events were hugely attractive to the general public (Johnson, 1977). For example, the 7th International Handicrafts and Do it Yourself Exhibition held in London in 1959 attracted a quarter of a million visitors (*Do it Yourself* Magazine, September, 1959, p.797). This forum was another important medium through which the magazines could connect with their readership base. As the Editor of one of the magazines explains following the second of such exhibitions:

Our technicians and advisers also had the pleasure of meeting a great many of our readers who visited our stand. It would seem from the many letters of appreciation which we received that the Exhibition proved very popular with readers. (*The Practical Householder*, May, 1959, p.585).

Manufacturers were a regular feature at these public DIY exhibitions. By 1965, the exhibition hosted by *Do it Yourself* magazine was hosting 150 of such exhibitors (*Do it Yourself* Magazine, September, 1965, p.1077). Showcasing their innovative new products in such a venue allowed direct access to their consumers. Wall paper manufacturers held “paper-hanging demonstration theatres” (*Do it Yourself* Magazine, September, 1958, p.847) while power tool manufacturers provided workshops on how to use their products; on one occasion the power tool manufacturer Stanley employed young housewives to demonstrate their products to show how easy they were to use (*The Times*, 30 August, 1963, p.5).

Public exhibitions were also a space in which links could be made between DIY and the media. The 1955 Ideal Home Exhibition captures this growing communion particularly well. In this year, the exhibition launched its first DIY Theatre, a show in which presenters (including BBC expert W.P. Matthew) provided DIY demonstrations and advice (Ryan, 1997, p.111). At the exact same time, the exhibition was also hosting the first Television Theatre, an information point in which visitors could gain guidance on television purchase (ibid.). The 1950s then witnessed the start of what would become an intensely symbiotic relationship between television viewing and DIY activity.

Women's magazines also deserve a mention in the enrolment process. These popular publications not only promoted DIY as an activity to readers, but they also enrolled manufacturers into the process. Similar to the specialist DIY magazines, women's magazines of the 1950s carried advertisements for the new array of DIY products. For example, the June 1959 issue of *Woman's Journal* contained an advertisement for the Glazed & Floor Tile Manufacturers' Association (back cover), for Walpamur Paints (p.88), and Duralay carpet underlay (p.66). Magazines articles also highlight the value of manufacturers' products. An article in a 1957 issue of *Woman* magazine features the DIY work of a Durham couple, acknowledging the role of a new lathe in the husband's carpentry endeavours (*Woman*, 18 May, 1957, p.20).

The essence of enrolment according to Callon (1986) is about defining and co-ordinating the roles of the stakeholders. In successful enrolment, each actor accepts the role which has been assigned to them in the network. During the 1950s, an assemblage of actors came together with a common goal: the advancement of DIY. As will be discussed in the next section, they were successfully enrolled into a network such that by the end of that era DIY had become an accepted part of the rhythm of everyday life.

5.5 Mobilization: the DIY nation

The final stage of the translation process culminates in the creation of a network of alliance between actors, the formation of a united, stabilised front in which there is common agreement with regard to the way forward. In other words, a consensus is reached among a diverse set of actors. In this process of mobilization, the few come to represent and speak for the many, one unified voice emerges.

Once again the specialist DIY magazines come to play an important role in this stage of the translation process. They don the mantle of spokespersons for a range of actors (readers, manufacturers, retailers, exhibition attendees). They make strong positive pronouncements regarding the state of DIY. They establish it as a fact, an uncontested feature of the era. The magazines are littered with statements such as: "From being rather unusual it is now taken for granted that most people will do their own home decorating and odd job repairs and maintenance" (*Practical Householder Annual*, 1963, p.25). DIY has become "an essential

part of modern living” (*Do it Yourself Magazine*, December, 1963, p.1409), “a great national industry” (*Do it Yourself Magazine*, May 1964, p.531), “an established way of life.” (*Practical Householder Annual*, 1965, p.21). Consequently, by the 1960s a successful assemblage has been constructed and mobilised such that DIY had become a firm fact of life.

In summary, while the preconditions for Britain’s contemporary obsession with DIY were formed from numerous historical strands, from the 19th century Arts and Crafts movement to the self sufficient mentality of the Second World War years, the 1950s marks the era in which the activity of DIY became a more permanent feature of the nation’s pastime pursuits and cultural psyche. A number of factors coalesced to create this transformation. This paper suggests that Callon’s four moments of translation are a useful means of structuring and understanding this change, and in particular, of highlighting the role of a calculative technology in the process. With the creation of a DIY actor network, DIY donned the mantle of phenomenon rather than of mere home repair. As Jackson (2006, p.61) observes of this period of transition: “Home improvement was no longer tackled only out of necessity, but as part of a project leading to more aestheticized lifestyles, and as a means of establishing status and identity”.

6. Concluding comments

This paper has sought to explain the popular growth in DIY activity through the theoretical lens of Callon’s (1986) four moments of translation. This framing facilitates an understanding of the process by which DIY changed from an activity driven by economic necessity to a recreational pastime enjoyed by the masses. It first captures the manner in which DIY comes to be viewed as the solution to the problem of labour shortages and the rising cost of employing professional tradesmen. It subsequently suggests how several diverse actors come together to promote DIY activity. This coming together is the process of translation which involves the creation of alliances between actors sharing a common goal. Hence the interests of heterogeneous parties converge and mobilise resources in a common direction. As Callon (1991, p.145) argues: “A successful process of translation thus generates a shared space, equivalence and commensurability. It aligns.” In the case presented here, we witness the enrolment of a range of heterogeneous actors, from manufacturers to the media, and from the handyman to the home exhibition. In this manner, a strong and powerful network is formed.

Hence, the paper argues that a translation of interests culminated in the contemporary phenomenon of DIY.

Calculative technologies were intricately bound up with the creation and sustenance of this actor network. One of the core rationales of DIY is the saving in labour cost. Following Skærbæk and Melander (2004), the paper suggests the role of accounting, and calculative practices more generally, as interestment devices. In this case, the labour cost saving associated with DIY acts as an important interface between actors in the network. Accounting can therefore be seen as a central part of the process through which DIY becomes established as a popular pursuit.

Consequently, ANT is a useful theoretical framework to showcase the broad scope of accounting. Lowe (2001, p.327) has previously demonstrated how accounting technologies can play a “critical role in mediating social networks in modern organisations”. Indeed, the reach of accounting can extend to mediating social networks far beyond organizational boundaries. The case illustrated here indicates how calculative technologies can influence DIY behaviour. Expanding the scope of accounting in this manner is an important project for accounting scholarship. Chapman et al. (2009) have acknowledged that the challenge for accounting research is to influence debates within the broader social science community. One means of achieving such a goal is to highlight the role of accounting in promoting popular pursuits such as DIY and hence in shaping society more generally.

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